

# Governor candidates discuss health issues

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The right of all Alaskans to receive affordable health care was a recurring theme in a forum for the Alaskan gubernatorial candidates sponsored by the Health Care Coalition of Alaska.

Candidates Tony Knowles, Arliss Sturgulewski and a spokesperson for Walter Hickel presented their views on health care issues before an audience at Providence Hospital Tuesday.

Although the candidates all agreed that ensuring adequate health care for Alaskans must be a priority for state government, they differed in their emphasis of particular problems and proposed solutions.

The Health Care Coalition, representing seven independent health organizations and more than 15,000 health professionals in Alaska, organized the forum to allow candidates to express their views on issues seen as vitally important to health care in the state.

In opening statements, the candidates all pledged their commitment to ensuring that Alaskans receive quality health care. Pointing to statistics on infant mortality, injury, substance abuse and domestic violence in Alaska, Democrat Knowles stated that problems need to be addressed with a state health care policy that emphasizes "strategic planning" to provide long-term solutions as well as immediate attention to critical issues.

Republican Sturgulewski empha-

sized the need to bring together the resources of the state and federal governments and the military to meet health needs, while the aide for Alaska Independence Party Hickel cited "33 years of continuous commitment" to quality health care as evidence of his concern for the future.

In answering the forum questions, Knowles several times emphasized prevention as a method to improve health status and cut costs. Knowles expressed strong support for health education in the schools to address such problems as teen pregnancy, AIDS and substance abuse.

Speaking for Hickel, Roberly Waldron expressed support for health education, but cautioned that the state should not interfere with the right of school boards to determine curriculum. She also said Hickel and his running mate Jack Coghill strongly support the recriminalization of marijuana.

In their closing comments, the three gubernatorial candidates revealed the basic differences in philosophy and outlook which had led them to enter the race.

Waldron stressed the need for jobs and economic development.

"A person without a job is in a poor environment no matter how beautiful their surroundings," the Hickel statement said.

In contrast, Knowles emphasized his support for environmental measures for clean water, clean air and hazard-

ous waste management. He promised the health care coalition that he will "work with you as a champion, shoulder to shoulder" to accomplish mutual goals.

Sturgulewski pledged to address the

budget process, education and the economy to rescue "a state adrift." Like the other candidates, she emphasized the need for cooperation from all involved to solve the state's problems.